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FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: REVIEW OF MAINSTREAMING IN ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General

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INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 50/164 of 22 December 1995, the General Assembly requested that a progress report on the status of women in the Secretariat be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session.

2. By the same resolution, while noting the efforts made to date to implement the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000), 1/ the General Assembly expressed disappointment that the objective set in its resolution 45/125 of 14 December 1990 of a 35 per cent overall participation rate of women in posts subject to geographical distribution by 1995, as well as the goal in resolution 45/239 C of a 25 per cent participation rate of women in posts at the D-1 level and above by 1995, had not been met. None the less, the General Assembly called upon the Secretary-General to fulfil his target, reaffirmed by the Fourth World Conference on Women, for the achievement of overall gender equality, particularly at the Professional level and above, of having women hold 50 per cent of managerial and decision-making positions by the year 2000. 2/

3. Resolution 49/222 A and B of 23 December 1994 and 20 July 1995, respectively, expressed support for the Secretary-General's strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat and the statement of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, in which members of the Committee reaffirmed their strong commitment to ensuring that the advancement of women remained a priority within the organizations of the United Nations common system and to taking measures to improve, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the status of women in their respective secretariats. Resolution 50/164 welcomed the report of the Secretary-General to the fiftieth session on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/50/691) and, again, the ACC statement (A/50/691, annex).

4. In resolution 50/164, the General Assembly reiterated its support for the introduction of more flexible and gender-sensitive work practices, including, for example: introducing job sharing and flexible working hour policies; providing child-care facilities or facilitating such arrangements; offering career break schemes; encouraging opportunities for spouse employment; and improving access for all staff to training and career development opportunities.

5. Because of the short interval between the end of the regular session of the General Assembly and the opening of the Commission on the Status of Women, the present report is focused on a brief update of relevant developments and changes in statistical data that have taken place since the June 1995 figures were reported to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

I. STATISTICAL UPDATE

6. In table 5 of his report to the fiftieth session (A/50/691), the Secretary-General indicated the level of representation of women by department or office, of the global Secretariat. The annexed table updates this data as at 31 December 1995. The Department of Administration and Management and the

Department of Public Information have a representation level of 54.3 per cent and 50.2 per cent women, respectively. The Department for Policy Coordination and Social Development increased its level of representation over the July-December 1995 period, to reach 46.2 per cent women. The overall level of representation within the global Secretariat rose 0.5 per cent to reach 34.6 per cent at the end of 1995, falling only 0.4 per cent short of the 35 per cent target set by resolutions 45/125 and 45/239. As of 31 December 1995, 16.9 per cent of posts at the D-1 level and above were encumbered by women (see attached table).

7. In comparison with figures reported to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, the number of women promoted within the Professional and higher levels (P-2 to D-1) has generally declined during the reporting period, with the only increase in the percentage levels reported relating to the D-1 level, which shows an increase from 29.2 to 31.4 per cent. Over the period, the percentage of promotions of women to the P-3 to P-5 levels decreased from 60.0 per cent to 48.6 per cent, from 47.3 to 41.0 per cent, and from 58.9 to 52.5 per cent, respectively.

8. There has been a small increase in the percentage of women appointed to the lower and middle Professional levels, as follows: 53.6 to 66.6 per cent at the P-2 level; 46.2 to 50.7 per cent at the P-3 level; and 33.3 to 35.8 per cent at the P-4 level. There has, however, been a marked decrease in the number of appointments of women at the P-5 and D-1 levels, which respectively have decreased from 42.9 to 30.7 per cent and 40.0 to 22.2 per cent.

9. Efforts will have to be made to maintain the focus on the need to ensure that every opportunity to appoint or promote qualified women is taken. It is to be expected, however, that the mandated increase in vacancy rates and cost reductions mandated by General Assembly resolution 50/215 on the implementation of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 will have a direct impact on the availability of placement opportunities for all staff, and consequently on the opportunities to improve the representation of women in the global Secretariat.

II. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

A. Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the advancement of women through and in the programmes of the United Nations system: What happens after the Fourth World Conference on Women?

10. In 1995, the Joint Inspection Unit issued a report entitled "The advancement of women through and in the programmes of the United Nations system: What happens after the Fourth World Conference on Women?" (JIU/REP/95/5). The Secretary-General shares many of the views expressed in the report. Included among these is the Inspector's view that earlier world conferences on women, convened over the past 20 years, have yielded significant progress in defining common problems as well as sharing experiences and information in the process of forming a strategic vision and policy for achieving equality of opportunity for women. He also shares her belief that these lessons should be put to good use

in taking effective action for the advancement of women, both within the United Nation system and through United Nations system programmes.

11. Of particular note within the context of the global Secretariat's current financial and administrative situation is the Inspector's recommendation concerning "the need to exercise vigilance in any down-sizing to ensure that women staff's hard-earned status is not disproportionately penalized". The Secretary-General fully shares this concern and remains committed to taking measures to ensure that it will indeed be met. Specifically, he is fully cognizant that the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/215 of 23 December 1995, in particular the mandated increase in Professional and General Service vacancy rates, represents a significant challenge to sustaining the progress achieved in advancing the status of women. Guidelines for dealing with the human resources management aspects of any down-sizing exercise will be developed in the context of ensuring full compliance with the principles set out in Articles 8 and 101 of the Charter of the United Nations.

B. Issuance of documents ST/AI/412 and ST/SGB/282

12. Important tools in guiding managers in maintaining their efforts to improve the representation of women in the global Secretariat are the special measures introduced for this purpose by the Secretary-General. While administrative instruction ST/AI/382, which first outlined these measures in March 1993, is regarded as a landmark document, it was considered that the consolidation of all policy issuances on achieving gender balance within one issuance would improve the effectiveness of the special measures, the efficiency and evenness with which they could be applied, and the ease with which their application could be monitored by the Office of Human Resources Management of the United Nations Secretariat and the Secretary-General's Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat.

13. To this end, the work of an interdepartmental task force has resulted in the issuance of two documents, "Policies to achieve gender equality in the United Nations" (ST/SGB/282) and "Special measures for the achievement of gender equality" (ST/AI/412). These two documents address virtually all of the issues raised by the Steering Committee and cover such issues as, inter alia: gender, cultural diversity and sensitivity as part of the performance appraisal of managers; allowing flexibility with regard to seniority when considering women for promotion; requiring that departments and offices keep records of their own gender distribution in terms of post incumbency; considering qualified women candidates within the common United Nations system as internal Secretariat candidates for placement opportunities; recognizing service of one year or longer on any type of appointment of qualified women candidates to allow them to compete as internal candidates for posts within the global Secretariat; and allowing General Service staff who meet the other entry criteria the opportunity to sit P-3 national competitive examinations. Having recently been appointed by the Secretary-General, a new Steering Committee, in collaboration with the Office of the Senior Adviser on gender issues, is expected to focus its attention on developing further its role in monitoring progress in achieving the goals of the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat.

C. Strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat

14. The Secretary-General's strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000) has received the full support of the General Assembly and the ACC. It sets out clear strategies and action steps to be taken in working to achieve the quantitative targets set by the General Assembly for the representation of women in posts subject to geographical distribution and at the senior, policy-making levels. The strategic plan of action, moreover, seeks to improve the quality of the work life of women working in the Secretariat, so as to create the "conditions of equality of participation of both men and women" mandated under Article 8 of the Charter.

15. The Secretary-General's strategy for the management of the Organization's human resources (A/C.5/49/5) also seeks to address a number of long-standing obstacles to improving the status of women in the Secretariat. The primary goal of the strategy is "to develop a management environment and culture that is supportive of having staff members contribute to their maximum potential, effectiveness and efficiency".

16. Built into this strategy are specific measures designed to foster a secure and gender-balanced work environment. Essential elements of such an environment and culture are systems of accountability and responsibility, whereby managers are held accountable to effectively manage the human and other resources entrusted to their care; objective performance appraisal and management systems, which evaluate, inter alia, the performance of managers in such areas as achieving gender balance among staff and demonstrating sensitivity to gender issues and the multicultural United Nations workplace; measures to deal effectively and expeditiously with harassment, including sexual harassment, when it does occur; and ultimately, a management culture and accompanying policies and systems geared to prevent harassment from occurring.

17. The Secretariat has recently received a grant to finance the development of a questionnaire to gauge the degree to which harassment exists in the global United Nations Secretariat. Work on the survey is expected to begin in early March 1996. It will be guided by a joint staff-management task force, rely on focus groups at all main duty stations of the global Secretariat, and include participation of peace-keeping and field offices. The United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have expressed interest in participating in the project. Given its broad scope and the many factors involved, the project is expected to take up to one year to complete. As far as possible, however, the lessons learned during the course of implementing the project will be put into action along the way. For example, as soon as possible, the Secretariat intends to produce a pocket guide outlining existing measures and resources available to staff experiencing harassment. The results of the survey will be used to strengthen existing policies and procedures for dealing with harassment in the United Nations workplace.

D. Information sharing and training

18. Finally, information sharing and training represent important means of fostering awareness of gender issues and cultivating the people-management skills required to bring about the required change in the Organization's management culture. In addition to enhancing the gender awareness modules of existing orientation and other staff training programmes, in 1995 the Office of Human Resources Management began offering senior management a people-management training programme specifically designed for the multicultural United Nations environment. This programme not only works to enhance overall management skills, but is balanced, both from the viewpoint of participants and content, to sensitize senior managers to the valuable contributions of women colleagues, particularly at the senior managerial levels. Although the programme was on temporary suspension due to the cash-flow crisis, it has resumed early in 1996.

CONCLUSION

19. It is noteworthy that during the General Assembly session, when special attention was being given to women's issues, statistics on the appointment and promotion of women in the global Secretariat showed, in fact, a decline at some levels. This underscores the need for special diligence in keeping the focus within the Secretariat on the effective implementation of the strategic plan of action.

20. Heightening awareness of the shared organizational and individual responsibility to give equality of opportunity to men and women colleagues to participate in the work of the Organization represents the main means of building on the advances achieved thus far in the quantitative and qualitative improvements in the status of women in the global Secretariat. The Secretary-General's decision to designate one of the Special Advisers in his office to act as his Adviser on gender issues, in close cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Office of Human Resources Management and other relevant entities, is an important measure designed to assist him in ensuring the mainstreaming of gender concerns system-wide and in facilitating a coordinated follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Notes

1/ A/49/587 and Corr.1, sect. IV.

2/ See Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

Annex

GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF STAFF IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT
BY DEPARTMENT OR OFFICE AND BY GRADE
PROFESSIONAL AND HIGHER LEVEL STAFF IN POSTS SUBJECT TO GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 1995

DEPARTMENT/OFFICE	USG		ASG		D-2		D-1		P-5		P-4		P-3		P-2		P-1		TOTAL		GRAND TOTAL	% OF WOMEN
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M		
55% and over																						
REGCOM	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	100.0
UNSCOM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	100.0
45% and over																						
DAMOHRM	0	0	0	1	2	1	2	3	8	6	13	11	10	9	8	5	0	0	43	36	79	54.4
DAM	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	3	4	5	7	3	3	2	2	2	0	0	19	16	35	54.3
DPI a/	1	0	0	1	1	4	6	12	13	21	32	34	46	35	29	20	0	0	128	127	255	50.2
UNJSPF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	7	3	7	10	1	0	0	0	17	19	36	47.2
DPCSD	0	1	0	0	1	3	2	11	7	15	15	11	11	4	6	4	0	0	42	49	91	46.2
DAMOPPBA	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	4	10	7	10	11	15	14	6	7	0	0	41	48	89	46.1
35% and over																						
UNEP	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	5	1	1	3	3	0	0	9	12	21	42.9
DDSMS	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	7	6	12	15	19	10	8	3	1	0	0	35	50	85	41.2
UNCHR	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	6	7	12	8	8	5	3	0	0	22	32	54	40.7
INTORG b/	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	5	40.0
UNOG	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	7	7	7	5	12	12	22	12	11	0	0	39	61	100	39.0
DCP	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	7	8	7	3	8	6	3	0	0	18	29	47	38.3
DPA	0	1	0	2	1	8	6	10	11	20	15	22	11	14	6	7	0	0	50	84	134	37.3
OLA	0	1	0	0	1	3	0	9	8	11	6	9	4	9	8	6	0	0	27	48	75	36.0
25% and over																						
OIOS	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	1	6	8	10	2	9	4	1	0	0	16	31	47	34.0
DESIPA	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	10	10	11	13	24	9	23	9	14	0	0	43	85	128	33.6
DAMOCSS	0	0	0	1	0	4	4	12	8	14	11	22	10	24	8	10	0	0	41	87	128	32.0
EOSG	0	2	1	1	0	1	3	2	2	3	0	3	1	4	1	2	0	0	8	18	26	30.8
DPKO	0	1	0	2	0	3	1	7	2	6	7	14	8	8	1	3	0	0	19	44	63	30.2
ESCAP	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	9	2	20	10	31	9	20	13	11	0	0	37	92	129	28.7
ESCWA	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	12	4	20	6	6	4	3	0	0	17	45	62	27.4
DHA	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	7	3	10	2	8	3	0	4	2	0	0	12	32	44	27.3
ECLAC	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	10	7	19	7	32	12	21	9	17	0	0	36	101	137	26.3
DPKOPALD	0	0	0	3	0	4	0	7	5	19	3	13	8	8	4	4	0	0	20	58	78	25.6
24% and under																						
UNCTAD	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	22	6	39	9	37	20	37	13	17	0	0	49	156	205	23.9
UNOV	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	4	1	6	4	11	1	13	3	2	0	0	11	37	48	22.9
ECE	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	5	2	16	7	18	5	18	4	13	0	0	20	71	91	22.0
ECA	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	9	3	32	7	37	14	37	9	13	0	0	34	130	164	20.7
UNCHS	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	3	1	4	2	10	3	10	1	4	0	0	8	33	41	19.5
UNCC	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	0.0
TOTAL	2	20	1	14	11	55	42	186	137	343	238	450	252	382	182	188	0	0	865	1638	2503	34.6

Source: DAMOHRM/HRMIS.

It should be noted that percentages for offices with less than 20 staff on board are not significant.

a/ Including information centres.

b/ Including the secretariats of CCAQ, ICC, ISCC and JIU.

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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

In its resolution 1995/30, entitled "Palestinian women", the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation of Palestinian women and to assist them by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session a report on the implementation of the resolution. The present report monitors conditions of human rights during the period under review and describes new developments, focusing on projects supported and carried out by the United Nations system. It also discusses emerging concerns and provides suggestions in line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The emphasis of the report has shifted from monitoring the general living conditions of Palestinian women to monitoring aspects of their development and human rights, while not neglecting the specific political framework.

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INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with paragraph 260 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for Women, 1/ the situation of Palestinian women and children has been monitored regularly by the Commission on the Status of Women.

2. In its resolution 1995/30, on Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General "to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission ... at its fortieth session a report on the progress made in the implementation" of the resolution. It requested the Commission to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Strategies. The Commission on the Status of Women, in its resolution 39/3, entitled "Women in the Middle East peace process", stressed the importance of, and need for, achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It urged Governments, intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations to include women in the peace process and to expedite economic, financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women.

3. Since the signing by the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, on 13 September 1993, the situation in the occupied territories has undergone major changes. Palestinian autonomy has taken shape with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in May 1994, following the signing of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area, and has been further consolidated following the signing of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Elections for a Palestinian Council and for the Ra'ees of the Executive Authority of the Palestinian Council were held on 20 January 1996. The Palestinian interim self-government authority will serve for a transitional period not exceeding five years.

4. As a result of these political developments, the focus of the present report has shifted from that of previous reports: instead of monitoring the general living conditions of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation, the present report focuses on the monitoring of violations of human rights that might persist as a result of the occupation and the consideration of women's participation and role in the establishment of a new political, economic and social regime. The report emphasizes aspects of development, accountability and respect for the human rights of women within a specific political framework. This new approach is in line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. 2/ However, the rapid pace of the political changes of the past year have made it difficult to obtain reliable data and up-to-date detailed information for the report.

I. RESULTS OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

5. The Fourth World Conference on Women, without making reference to any particular national context, considered "women under occupation" in the strategic area of concern "Women and armed conflict". It established a link between the advancement of women and the peaceful settlement of conflicts:

> "An environment that maintains world peace and promotes and protects human rights, democracy and the peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with the principles of non-threat or use of force against territorial integrity or political independence and of respect for sovereignty as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, is an important factor for the advancement of women. Peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men and development. Armed and other types of conflict and terrorism and hostage-taking still persist in many parts of the world. Aggression, foreign occupation, ethnic and other types of conflicts are an ongoing reality affecting women and men in nearly every region." 3/

6. The Platform for Action acknowledged the necessity for women to contribute to conflict resolution and their crucial role during times of armed conflict and collapse of communities:

> "The equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Although women have begun to play an important role in conflict resolution, peace-keeping and defence and foreign affairs mechanisms, they are still underrepresented in decision-making positions. If women are to play an equal part in securing and maintaining peace, they must be empowered politically and economically and represented adequately at all levels of decision-making." 4/

> "(Women) often work to preserve social order in the midst of armed and other conflicts. Women make an important but often unrecognized contribution as peace educators both in their families and in their societies." 5/

7. The Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Amman, 9-10 November 1994) makes specific reference to peace in the region:

> "A comprehensive and just peace and stability in the region are prerequisites to development and equality. A comprehensive and just peace would free the human and financial resources that are being spent on military equipment and wars, when they could be geared toward development which provides women with equal opportunities for participation." 6/

II. GENERAL LIVING CONDITIONS

8. Despite significant progress in the implementation of the agreements between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization throughout 1995, conditions in the occupied West Bank remained tense, and life in the self-rule areas continued to be affected by measures undertaken by the Israeli authorities, including various military and economic measures that have been detailed in other United Nations reports. 7/ For example, the Israeli authorities sealed the West Bank and Gaza Strip entirely on several occasions, preventing workers with valid permits from entering Israel and East Jerusalem. These measures exacerbated the economic hardship of many families. In view of

the harsh economic situation, the United Nations Special Coordinator in the occupied territories stated that the standard of living of Palestinians living under the autonomous region of Gaza had declined by 50 per cent since the signing of the Interim Agreement. 8/ A special appeal was launched to the donor community to support the Palestinian authorities in this crucial period.

III. EFFECTS OF THE PEACE PROCESS ON WOMEN

9. The peace process, welcomed by the majority of the Palestinian population, has had a significant impact on the lives of women and tne activities of women's organizations. One of the most significant questions has been the release of Palestinian prisoners, including a small number of women, whose health conditions had deteriorated. In accordance with the Interim Agreement, Israel was to release about 1,200 prisoners and detainees, including all female detainees and prisoners as soon as the Agreement went into effect. In October 1995, 21 women were released, but five others were not. Only one woman, who had been in solitary confinement, walked free; 20 others refused to leave their cells, protesting that Israel was not fulfilling its commitment regarding all female prisoners and detainees. The 25 women remaining in prison launched a hunger strike on 10 January 1996 in protest against Israel's continuing refusal to release them. 9/

10. Palestinian women, who played an active role during the intifadah, have remained involved since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. Women's organizations and human rights groups formed coalitions in the areas of human rights and legal services. They drafted a bill of women's rights following the release of the Palestinian Draft Basic Law and focused on procedural and administrative law important for its implementation. Women activists undertook a legal analysis of existing laws from a gender perspective and a review of their implementation, which was included in a handbook for legal literacy training. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and other international standards on women and human rights were widely discussed at the grass-roots level. 10/ The issue was raised about which models or mechanisms for addressing women's issues would be most appropriate in the future government. It was debated whether the recently created Women's Affairs Bureau should be an integrated part of the Palestinian Authority or a separate body. 11/ The Women's Affairs Technical Committee, set up by the Palestinian Authority, became a forum for the concerns expressed by women's non-governmental organizations and dealt with the mainstreaming of gender issues in development policies. Recently a Gender Mainstreaming Department was established within the Ministry of Planning.

11. For the Palestinian elections on 20 January 1996, women's organizations undertook their own preparations. Non-governmental organizations had closely observed the elections in South Africa and the role of the women's charter there. The introduction of a quota system in the Palestinian elections was regarded as controversial at the level of the women's movement. There was concern that, through the quota system, women candidates who were not gender-sensitized would be appointed to governmental posts. It was also asked whether women would stand for election from within their political parties or independently of any political party. Despite the limitations, a view in favour

of the quota system prevailed. Women led protests demanding a quota for women on the Palestinian Council, arguing that women faced difficulties in competing with men in the elections because of the historical inequalities in the male-dominated society. The Palestinian Election Law provided for a system of regulations that determine the number of assembly seats in each constituency in proportion to the population. Based on the registration of voters in the different constituencies, quotas were allocated only for Christians and the Samaritan sect, but no provision was made to ensure an equal representation of women. 12/ According to the Central Election Commission, 1,013,235 Palestinians aged 18 and over were registered in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem to vote in the elections. Forty-nine per cent of the registered voters were women. Among the 676 candidates for the 88-seat legislative council, there were only 28 women (4 per cent). The sole opponent to PLO Chairman Arafat in the election for Ra'ees of the Executive Authority of the Palestinian Council was a woman, Ms. Samiha Khalil of Ramallah. Five women, representing 5.6 per cent, were elected to the Palestinian Council.

IV. ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINIAN WOMEN BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

12. During the period under review, a number of projects for Palestinian women were carried out and initiated by the United Nations system and bilateral donors in close cooperation with the Palestinian Authority and non-governmental organizations.

13. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in addition to its ongoing work for women, financed new projects under the Palestinian Women's Initiative Fund, including a community-run kindergarten in the West Bank and a training workshop in the maintenance and repair of sewing and knitting machines in Gaza. It operated a solidarity group-lending programme in the Gaza Strip to make credit available to women working in micro enterprises and as street vendors in the informal sector of the economy. The programme offered loans averaging $400 to individual women for the expansion of their income-generating activities. Under the Peace Implementation Programme, it established nine women's programme centres, and construction began for a College of Nursing and Allied Health Science. In the field of education, UNRWA awarded university scholarships to 863 Palestine refugee pupils, including 371 women. 13/

14. THE UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP), through its Gender in Development Programme (GIDP), carried out a variety of projects, including cooperation with the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling on the improvement of Palestinian women's legal status. It organized a workshop for Palestinian media agencies and individuals on the portrayal of gender roles in the media and supported the Palestinian Coalition for Women's Health which aims to improve the provision of health services for Palestinian women by addressing their needs using a life-cycle approach. To improve access to education - so far limited for women in particular due to lack of adequate educational facilities and overcrowding in schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip - classrooms in villages and rural areas were constructed and renovated, primarily for girls. UNDP/PAPP is upgrading a cultural and educational complex in Jericho to provide 23 additional classrooms for primary and secondary girls'

schools and is engaging in an extensive school rehabilitation project to provide supplementary facilities for schools throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including at least 25 classrooms in primary and secondary girls' schools. A school drop-out study, sponsored by UNDP, to be carried out by the Palestinian Ministry of Education, will target Palestinian female youth. Women's enrolment in agricultural schools is encouraged in a project for agricultural education and training which will offer both pre-service and in-service training and target women as 50 per cent of the beneficiaries. The gender-in-development initiatives of UNDP/PAPP include a strategy of upstream interventions which aim at enlarging constituencies in advocacy and working directly with the Palestinian Authority ministries in order to enhance a gender-sensitive approach to policy planning and strategy formulation. They support the established women's units in the various ministries in order to build and strengthen their efforts for mainstreaming gender at the policy level.

15. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) focused on preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995), providing support and training to the Palestinian participants at the Conference and the NGO Forum. One specific area of support was institution-building, in particular, efforts to institutionalize gender planning within the emerging bodies of the Palestinian Authority. Other areas were political participation and conflict resolution, with emphasis on awareness-building for women in elections, and follow-up to the Conference, including the preparation of a national strategy for women based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. 2/ UNIFEM also launched a permanent WID Facilitation Initiative to coordinate the multiplicity of donors, non-governmental organizations and initiators of WID projects.

16. In addressing the needs of Palestinian children, youth and women, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) moved away from emergency interventions towards longer-term basic services for development and sustainability. For the first time since 1980, when its programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was launched, UNICEF could work in cooperation with a central Palestinian authority which provided the framework for planning, policy development and harmonization of basic services to children and women on a national level. Strategies to promote basic education for all, health promotion and empowerment of women were carried out and included, for example, the standardization of women's health services through the development of a Unified Maternal Health card. UNICEF gave priority to programmes reaching out to children in underprivileged communities in refugee camps, rural and urban areas, with special focus on the girl child. Gender issues were integrated into programming and training to upgrade the skills of health care and education professionals. UNICEF also supported the Palestinian preparation for and participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women. For the collection of disaggregated data on health and education indicators, UNICEF launched a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in collaboration with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Support for capacity-building of the Palestinian Authority institutions was a priority for UNICEF in 1995 and included the formulation of a national programme of action in order to ensure political and social mobilization and long-term planning for children, in particular girls.

17. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) undertook jointly with UNRWA and the World Health Organization (WHO) a needs assessment mission, whose recommendations will be taken into account in formulating projects to address the needs of Palestinian women. UNFPA also implemented two expanded maternal and child health and family planning projects in Gaza and the West Bank.

V. EMERGING CONCERNS

18. The need for sustainable economic development has been persistently underlined as crucial to the successful establishment of Palestinian interim self-government. In this respect the international community, including the donor agencies, made substantive commitments and were aware of their responsibility for providing support to the launching of an independent economy and for establishing a viable infrastructure. 14/

19. With regard to the inclusion of gender aspects, the development policies and planning in the Palestinian self-rule areas follow patterns similar to those that have been observed in other developing countries. From a number of critical assessments it seems apparent that women's status and potential roles in socio-economic development and their needs and interests were not given systematic consideration in the preparations of overall economic and social development plans or in the design of development proposals. An important study undertaken by the World Bank, for instance, did not consider women's role in the labour market. In a three-year emergency programme, only a pilot programme for youth and women in development was proposed. 15/ Conversely, the international donor community, particularly through their programmes on women in development, made a commitment to ensuring a more equal role for women in Palestinian society. From 1990 onwards, substantive support has been given for the development of women's institutions, income-generating projects and vocational training. 16/ This has contributed to the launching of small income-generating projects and greater professionalism in the work of the women's organizations, whose relevance for the overall economic development might, however, be questioned.

20. The approach taken in the design of development programmes had an impact on the elaboration of Palestinian national development priorities. Researchers on gender issues have been critical of the form and conceptualization of social entitlements and citizen's rights in the emerging policies of the Palestine authority. They have voiced concern that discussion of the Palestinian economy had been limited to macroeconomic trends and the formal market, with no regard to gender needs. They argued that, in the outline of a gender-biased and unequal system of social support, secure entitlements were based largely on waged employment and women's unpaid contribution; no recognition was given to unremunerated work. Women were not listed as components in the major programmes of national economic reconstruction. The household and, in consequence, women's multiple roles in it were considered important in the social welfare system only in the sense that they would have to absorb shocks and ensure service that could not be provided by the Authority. Scholars also identified a male bias in research, leadership, expertise and staffing by the international community as well as the local implementing authorities. 17/

21. Women's current roles in the economy, in particular in income-generating projects, and other economic projects have been scrutinized by scholars. A number of income-generating projects were set up during the intifadah, including women's cooperatives, home economy projects and a variety of small business projects. An evaluation of these projects found that the majority failed to survive and were closed not long after their establishment. At the root of their failure was disregard for the socio-economic and political context in which they operated. 18/

22. One particular concern of social scientists and policy researchers was the absence of reliable primary data on Palestinian society, which represents a serious obstacle when projects are being defined and future policies outlined. No reliable and comparable gender-segregated data existed on Palestinian women with regard to household composition, labour-force participation, access to property and resources, education or health. The lack was due to the different sources of collection and the number of researchers who could collect data on particular population groups only, such as the refugee population. A national census, as already envisaged by the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, is urgently needed, as are in-depth sectoral and topical studies of selected aspects of society. 19/

VI. CONCLUSIONS

23. Support to Palestinian women during the transitional period was requested by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1995/30. In addition to other United Nations bodies with mandates concerning the Palestinian people, including the United Nations Relief And Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and others, the Commission on the Status of Women has shown a long-term commitment by monitoring the situation of Palestinian women, as set out in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies 1/ and recalled in its various resolutions.

24. In view of the progress achieved in the peace process and the establishment of a Palestinian Authority, the Commission on the Status of Women, in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 2/ and in view of the shift in its monitoring of the situation of Palestinian women towards aspects of development, accountability and respect for the human rights of women, may wish that appropriate assistance be given to the following:

(a) Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution and decision-making;

(b) In implementing their agreements, the parties concerned should respect the human rights of Palestinian women;

(c) Ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making;

(d) Integrate a gender perspective in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects;

(e) Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice;

(f) Prepare for ratification of and accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, without reservations;

(g) Create a national machinery and other governmental bodies for the advancement of women at the highest possible level of government;

(h) Reduce the female illiteracy rate to at least half of its 1990 level;

(i) Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education;

(j) Promote women's economic rights and independence;

(k) Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade;

(l) Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and high quality health care and information and related services;

(m) Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.

Notes

1/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

2/ "Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995", chap. I, sect. 1.

3/ Ibid., para. 131.

4/ Ibid., para. 134.

5/ Ibid., para. 139.

6/ "Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 adopted at the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women" (E/CN.6/1995/5/Add.5, para. 14).

7/ "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories" (A/50/170), covering the period from 27 August to 31 December 1994; "Report of the Special Committee ..." (A/50/282), covering the

period from 1 January to 31 March 1995; "Report of the Special Committee ..." (A/50/463), covering the period 26 August 1994 to 18 August 1995; "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli settlements on the Palestinian people in the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, occupied since 1967, and on the Arab population of the Syrian Golan" (A/50/262).

8/ See A/50/170.

9/ The New York Times, 8 October 1995.

10/ Report of the Workshop on Women, at the United Nations International NGO Meeting and European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine; Geneva, 29 August-1 September 1994.

11/ Suha Hindiyeh-Mani, "Working towards self-determination and promoting civil society", paper presented at the United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine; New York, 19-21 June 1995.

12/ Palestinian election law, FBIS-NES-95-243-S of 19 December 1995.

13/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/50/13), paras. 184 and 205.

14/ See A/50/286.

15/ World Bank, Developing the Occupied Territories: An Investment for Peace, vols. 1-6 (Washington, D.C., 1993).

16/ UNDP, Assistance to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. 1992 compendium of ongoing and planned projects (Jerusalem, 1992).

17/ Rita Giacaman, Islah Jad, and Penny Johnson, "For the public good? PLO and social policy", Working paper No. 2, in Gender and society (Birzeit, Birzeit University, 1995).

18/ Nahla Abdo, "Women and the informal economy in Palestine: a feminist critique", Working paper No. 3, in Gender and society (Birzeit, Birzeit University, 1995).

19/ Lisa Taraki, "Society and gender in Palestine: international agencies", Working paper No. 2, in Gender and society (Birzeit, Birzeit University, 1995).